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TRACY OF TOBRUK



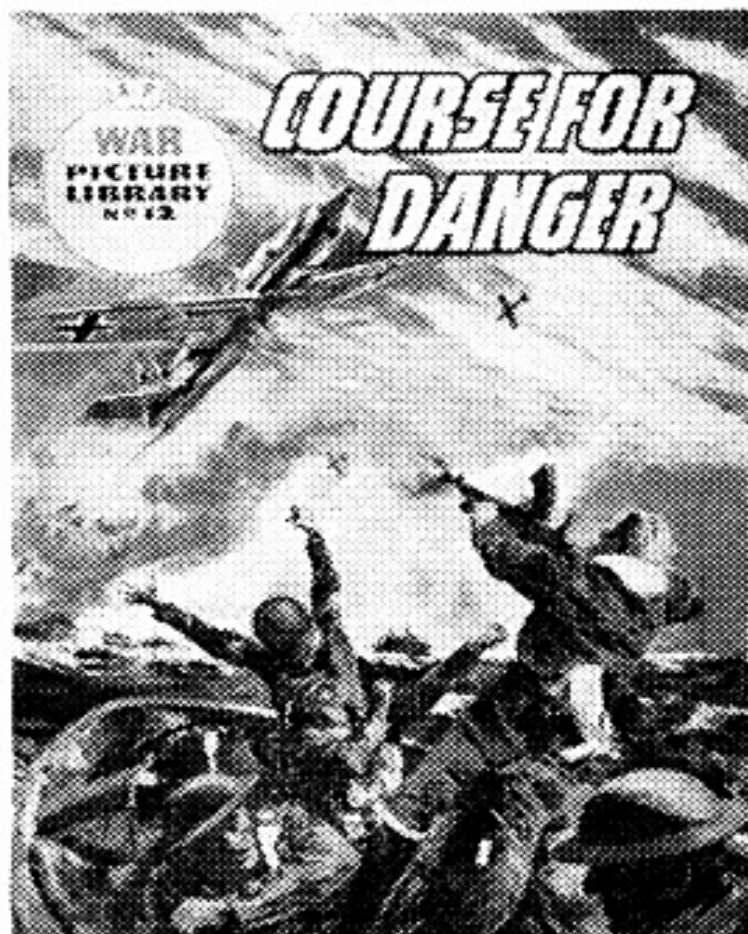
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TRACY OF TOBRUK

STIRRING TALES OF INCREDIBLE COURAGE AND DARING EMERGED FROM THE SEETHING CAULDRON OF THE NORTH AFRICAN CAMPAIGN WAGED IN THE LAST WAR. FOR TWO GRUELLING YEARS OF SAVAGE DESERT FIGHTING, THE TWO GIANT OPPONENTS, THE EIGHTH ARMY ALLIES AND GENERAL ROMMEL'S AFRIKA KORPS, WERE LOCKED IN A DEATH-GRAPPLE WHICH RAGED FROM LIBYA TO EGYPT AND BACK AGAIN. SELDOM WAS OUR SAFETY MORE IMPERILLED THAN IN THE YEAR 1941 WHEN THE ENEMY'S ARMoured MIGHT OVERRAN TOWN AFTER TOWN. FINALLY IT ENCIrcLED, BUT NEVER SUCCEEDED IN TAKING, THE INDOMITABLE GARRISON OF TOBRUK, WHOSE VERY NAME WAS TO RING LIKE A BUGLE-CALL OF DEFIANCE.



Chapter 1. **ESCAPE FROM TOBRUK**

WHILE SOME TROOPS WERE CAUGHT WITHIN TOBRUK ITSELF, OTHERS HACKED THEIR WAY CLEAR BY SHEER FORCE OF CHARACTER AND SPIRIT. SUCH A GROUP WAS LED BY CAPTAIN BILL TRACY, AN OFFICER IN A BRITISH ARMoured CAR UNIT.

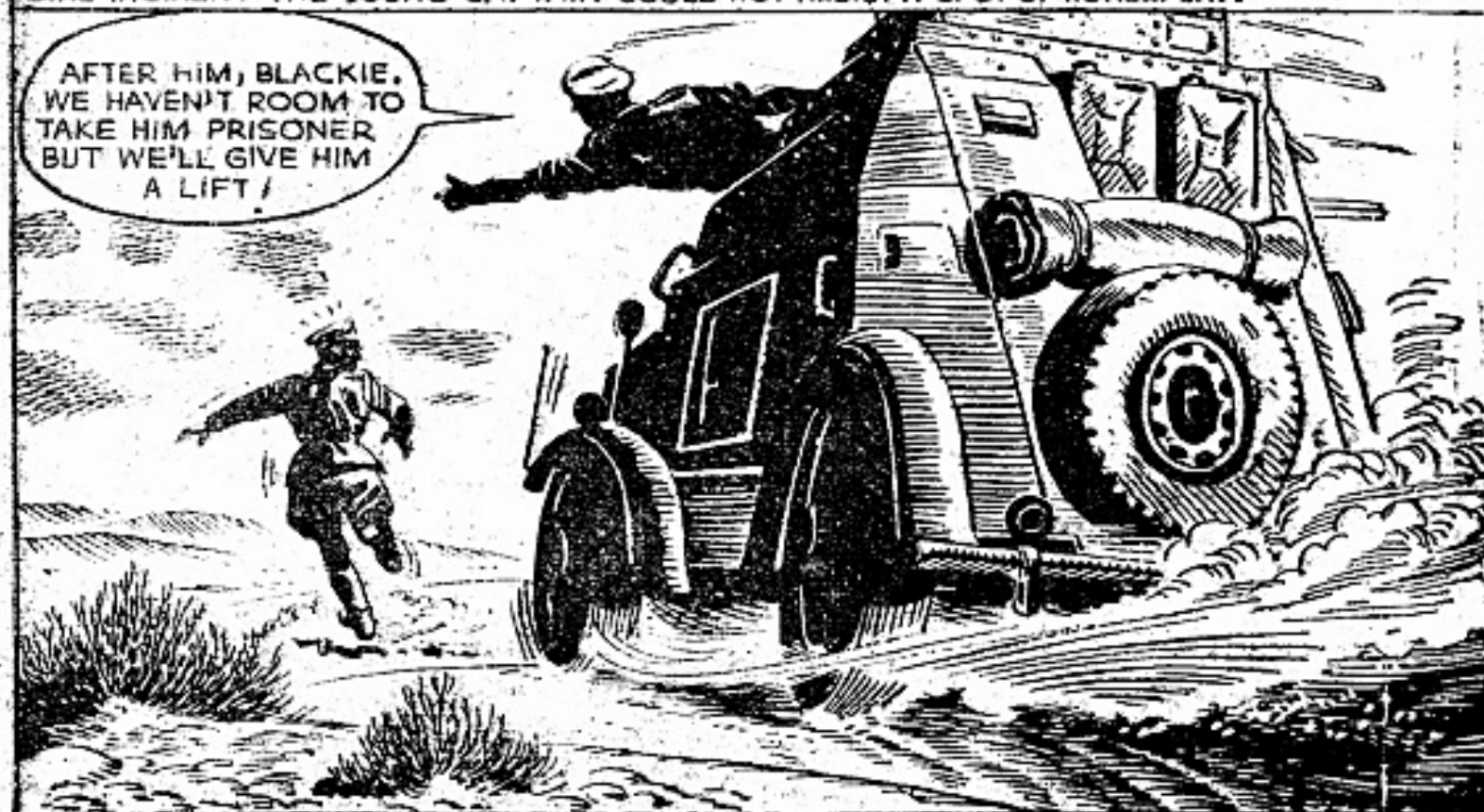


RALLYING THE REMNANTS OF HIS ARMoured CAR UNIT, BILL TRACY LED THEM AGAINST THE FULL MIGHT OF THE 20TH GERMAN ARMoured CAR REGIMENT CROWDING THE OUTSKIRTS OF TOBRUK.



TRACY'S MEN FOUGHT WITH DESPERATION AND, AT LAST, THE COLUMN OF ARMoured CARS HAD BROKEN THROUGH THE ENCIRCLEMENT OF GERMAN TANKS. TRACY SMILED AS HE SAW A GERMAN OFFICER FROM A WRECKED TANK RUNNING FOR HIS LIFE. EVEN IN THAT DIRE MOMENT THE YOUNG CAPTAIN COULD NOT RESIST A SPOT OF HORSEPLAY:

AFTER HIM, BLACKIE.
WE HAVEN'T ROOM TO
TAKE HIM PRISONER
BUT WE'LL GIVE HIM
A LIFT!



Tracy of Tobruk

BLACKIE WESTON, THE DRIVER, EXPERTLY STEERED THE CAR SO THAT BILL COULD LEAN OVER AND GRAB THE STARTLED OFFICER BY HIS BELT.



TRACY CARRIED THE STRUGGLING MAN FOR A FEW YARDS AND THEN IGNOMINIOUSLY DROPPED HIM.

SCHWEINHUND!
IF I EVER
CATCH YOU...!

TRACY'S THE NAME,
FRITZ ...SO LONG!



BY THE AFTERNOON TRACY'S LITTLE COLUMN THANKFULLY GAINED THE ALLIED LINES SOME MILES EAST OF TOBRUK.

BEEN TO THE PICTURES, MATE!

TRUST YOU TO KNOW WHEN IT'S TEA-TIME!

WHEN HE WAS CLEANED UP AND REFRESHED, TRACY AND HIS DRIVER WERE CALLED BEFORE THE STAFF PLANNING OFFICERS WHO WERE INTERESTED IN THEIR ESCAPE FROM TOBRUK.

WE ARE MOUNTING A COUNTER-ATTACK IN ORDER TO RELIEVE THE GARRISON INSIDE TOBRUK. YOUR EXPERIENCE COULD BE USEFUL.

WE WANT TO KNOW WHERE YOU BROKE THROUGH ... AND WHAT ENEMY YOU MET.

I'LL TELL YOU ALL I CAN, SIR!

Tracy of Tobruk

THE FOLLOWING MORNING TRACY WAS CALLED IN AGAIN... THIS TIME FOR A FAR MORE STARTLING REASON.

CAPTAIN TRACY, AS PART OF THE COUNTER ATTACK, WE ARE GOING TO DEPLOY A FLYING COLUMN TO HARRY THE REAR OF THAT GERMAN ARMoured REGIMENT YOU MET YESTERDAY. AND WE THINK YOU'RE THE MAN TO LEAD IT.


COME AND LOOK AT THIS MAP, TRACY.

BILL TRACY LEARNED THAT HIS COLUMN WAS TO DRIVE INTO THE SOUTHERLY DESERT AND THEN TO COME UP BEHIND THE GERMAN ARMoured CARS.

YOU WILL ATTACK IN THE REAR WITH AS MUCH NOISE AS YOU CAN MAKE AND THUS DRAW THE ENEMY'S ATTENTION WHILE THE TOBRUK GARRISON BREAKS OUT TO JOIN THE MAIN RELIEVING FORCE.

SURPRISE IS IMPERATIVE, SO TRAVEL BY NIGHT. YOU MUST BE THERE AT DAWN IN THREE DAYS TIME, TO COINCIDE WITH THE MAIN ASSAULT. IS THAT CLEAR?

I QUITE UNDERSTAND, SIR.



THRILLED WITH HIS SPECIAL MISSION, TRACY CAREFULLY PICKED HIS MEN AND VEHICLES. HE CHOSE HIS TRUSTY FRIEND BOB WATSON, AS HIS SECOND-IN-COMMAND.

WE HAVE TO TRAVEL BY NIGHT FOR THREE NIGHTS, BOB...GETTING TO TOBRUK AT DAWN.

... HIDING UP BY DAY, I TAKE IT. THIS SOUNDS AS IF IT HAS THE MAKINGS OF AN INTERESTING SHOW!

THAT EVENING, JUST BEFORE THE START, TRACY HAD A FEW WORDS WITH HIS MEN.

WELL, CHAPS, WE'RE RUNNING TO A PRETTY TIGHT SCHEDULE... SO WHATEVER HAPPENS, KEEP GOING... AND KEEP TOGETHER... AND GOOD LUCK!



A FINAL CHECK-OVER AND THE
ARMOURED COLUMN MOVED OFF
ACROSS THE DESERT, BACK
TOWARDS THE ENEMY LINES.



BY NIGHTFALL THEY HAD PENETRATED ENEMY COUNTRY, AND TRACY WAS NOT ALTOGETHER SURPRISED WHEN HIS SCOUT CAR REPORTED A GERMAN MOTORISED UNIT BIVOUACKING ROUND CAMP FIRES. WITH BOB WATSON AND THE SCOUT, TRACY WENT FORWARD ON FOOT TO RECCO THE GERMAN POSITION.

THERE'S NO GETTING AROUND THAT LOT, SIR, THEY'RE SITTING BETWEEN TWO GREAT STRETCHES OF SOFT SAND.

LOOKS LIKE WE'LL HAVE TO FIGHT OUR WAY THROUGH, BOB.

THERE SEEMS NO ALTERNATIVE, BILL. LET'S GET BACK TO THE COLUMN AND GET MOVING!

TRACY'S ORDERS WERE PASSED BACK DOWN THE COLUMN AND THEN, AT A GIVEN SIGNAL, THE ARMOURD CARS AND TRUCKS ROARED TO LIFE... AND SPED FROM BEHIND THE COVER OF A GULLY TOWARDS THE GERMAN CAMP.

ATTACK!
ATTACK!

THE PATROL CHARGED THE STARTLED
ENEMY WITH ALL GUNS BLAZING.

LET
'EM HAVE
IT!

ACH!





IN TWO MINUTES TRACY'S COLUMN
HAD COME AND GONE LIKE A
STREAM OF FLYING ROCKETS;
LEAVING THE GERMANS TO
STAND GAPING AFTER THEM.



BUT JUST BEFORE MIDNIGHT THE COLUMN RAN INTO TROUBLE.

UNLUCKY,
SIR. JUST CAUGHT
THE EDGE OF A SOFT BIT
BUT WE SHOULDN'T BE
LONG GETTING HER
OUT.

RIGHT...
LET'S GET
ORGANISED.



IT TOOK LONGER THAN EXPECTED
TO DRAG THE CAR FREE. MEANWHILE
THE MAIN BODY WAITED,
WONDERING WHETHER THE
ENEMY WAS GIVING CHASE.

EASY...
STEADY DOES
IT!



ONCE MORE THE COLUMN MOVED ON AND TRACY STAYED BEHIND TO DO A LITTLE RECCE IN THE REAR. BLACKIE EXPRESSED HIMSELF LIKE THE LONDON BOXING FAN HE WAS.

GOOD! NOW, BLACKIE, LET'S SEE IF WE'RE BEING CHASED.

CHASED! THOSE JERRIES WENT CLEAN THROUGH THE ROPES... AND THEY AIN'T BACK YET!



BUT AS BLACKIE REVERSED, IT BECAME THE JEEP'S TURN TO GET STUCK IN THE TREACHEROUS SAND!

THE WHEEL'S SPINNING, BLACKIE! I'LL GIVE THE JEEP A HEAVE.

WELL, WOULD YOU ADAM-AND-EYE IT!



TO TRACY'S CONCERN HE AND BLACKIE DID NOT GET THE JEEP FREE UNTIL THE DAWN. IT WAS A VERY DISGUSTED PAIR OF BRITISH SOLDIERS WHO CLIMBED BACK READY TO MOVE ON.

WE'RE BEHIND TIME. WE'LL HAVE TO GET CRACKING, BLACKIE!

I'LL STEP ON IT TILL IT HURTS!

AT THAT MOMENT THE GROWING ROAR OF A LOW-FLYING AIRCRAFT MADE TRACY HESITATE.

HOLD IT, BLACKIE. WHAT'S THIS?

KEEP STILL, SIR... IT'S AN EYIE PLANE!

BUT THE ITALIAN FIGHTER-BOMBER
HAD SPOTTED THEM. BLACKIE LEAPT
CLEAR, BUT TRACY WAS NOT SO LUCKY.

COME ON,
SIR! JUMP
FOR IT!

UH!
HE'S GOT ME
...MY LEG!

WITH ONE EYE ON THE CIRCLING
AIRCRAFT, BLACKIE DRAGGED
TRACY UNDER A
NEARBY ROCK.

THE PERISHER'S
COMING BACK,
SIR! HERE, LET'S
GET YOU UNDER
COVER!

TO THEIR AMAZEMENT HOWEVER, THE PLANE CALLED OFF THE SECOND ATTACK, AND LANDED. IN A MOMENT THEY SAW THE PILOT STEPPING OUT.

WHAT'S THE IDEA, BLACKIE? HE'S GRINNING ALL OVER HIS DIAL.

RECKON HE'S GOING TO FINISH US OFF WIV A PISTOL, THE 'EATHEN!



BUT AS THE PILOT DREW NEAR AND SPOKE IN PERFECT ENGLISH, TRACY REALISED THAT THIS WAS NO ORDINARY ITALIAN AIRMAN.

GOOD MORNING, GENTLEMEN! MY NAME IS MARIO FORZIA. I ATTACKED YOU ON AN IMPULSE. YOU WERE DEFENCELESS. WE ITALIANS DO NOT DO THAT.

I MUST APOLOGISE.

VERY DECENT, I MUST SAY, BUT WHAT ARE BLACKIE AND I SUPPOSED TO DO... WALK? AND DIE OF THIRST!



I TOLD MYSELF... ON SUCH A BEAUTIFUL MORNING, NO MAN SHOULD DIE. SO I TAKE YOU PRISONER, PLEASE.

WOUNDED AND WEAPONLESS TRACY GLOOMILY FELT HE COULD NOT VERY WELL ARGUE, BUT BLACKIE WAS INDIGNANT.

I KNOW THAT DODGE, MATE... HIT FIRST AND SAY 'SORRY' AFTERWARDS. WHAT ABOUT MISTER TRACY'S WOUNDED LEG?

I HIT YOU, MISTER TRACY? BUT I AM DESOLATED!

A FLESH WOUND... NOTHING SERIOUS.

MARIO WAS GENUINELY SORRY.

I HAVE A FIRST-AID KIT IN THE PLANE. WE WILL DRESS YOUR WOUND, MY FRIEND.

WHY, THANKS.

PRESENTLY THE SMILING MARIO WAS BACK WITH A BOX OF FIELD-DRESSING... ALSO A LOAF AND A BOTTLE OF WINE. BLACKIE BLINKED IN AMAZEMENT. THIS WAS NOT HIS IDEA OF AN ENEMY.

BREAD TO SUSTAIN YOU, SIGNOR... WINE TO REFRESH YOU... AND BANDAGES TO BIND YOU!

WELL, I DON'T KNOW!

EVERYTHING LAID ON, EH?

TO BLACKIE'S FURTHER AMAZEMENT, MARIO EXPERTLY BANDAGED TRACY'S WOUNDED LEG.

WHAT
MAKES YOU
DO ALL THIS,
MARIO? I'M
YOUR ENEMY.

FIRST, YOU ARE MY
PRISONER. SECOND, YOU ARE
VERY LIKE AN ENGLISHMAN WHO
WAS MY GREAT FRIEND. WE
CLIMBED THE MOUNTAINS... HE
AND I, WE WERE HAPPY.
ALAS, THEN THE WAR.

HAVING MADE TRACY COMFORTABLE, THE IRREPRESSIBLE MARIO SHARED OUT THE LOAF AND WINE AND THEN BURST INTO SNATCHES OF SONG, EXPLAINING THAT IT MIGHT RAISE THEIR SPIRITS.

NO SILENCE...

TRACY'S AMUSEMENT FADED HOWEVER AT THE THOUGHT OF HIS COLUMN. WHAT WERE THEY DOING?

I HOPE THEY'RE NOT WASTING VALUABLE TIME LOOKING FOR ME.

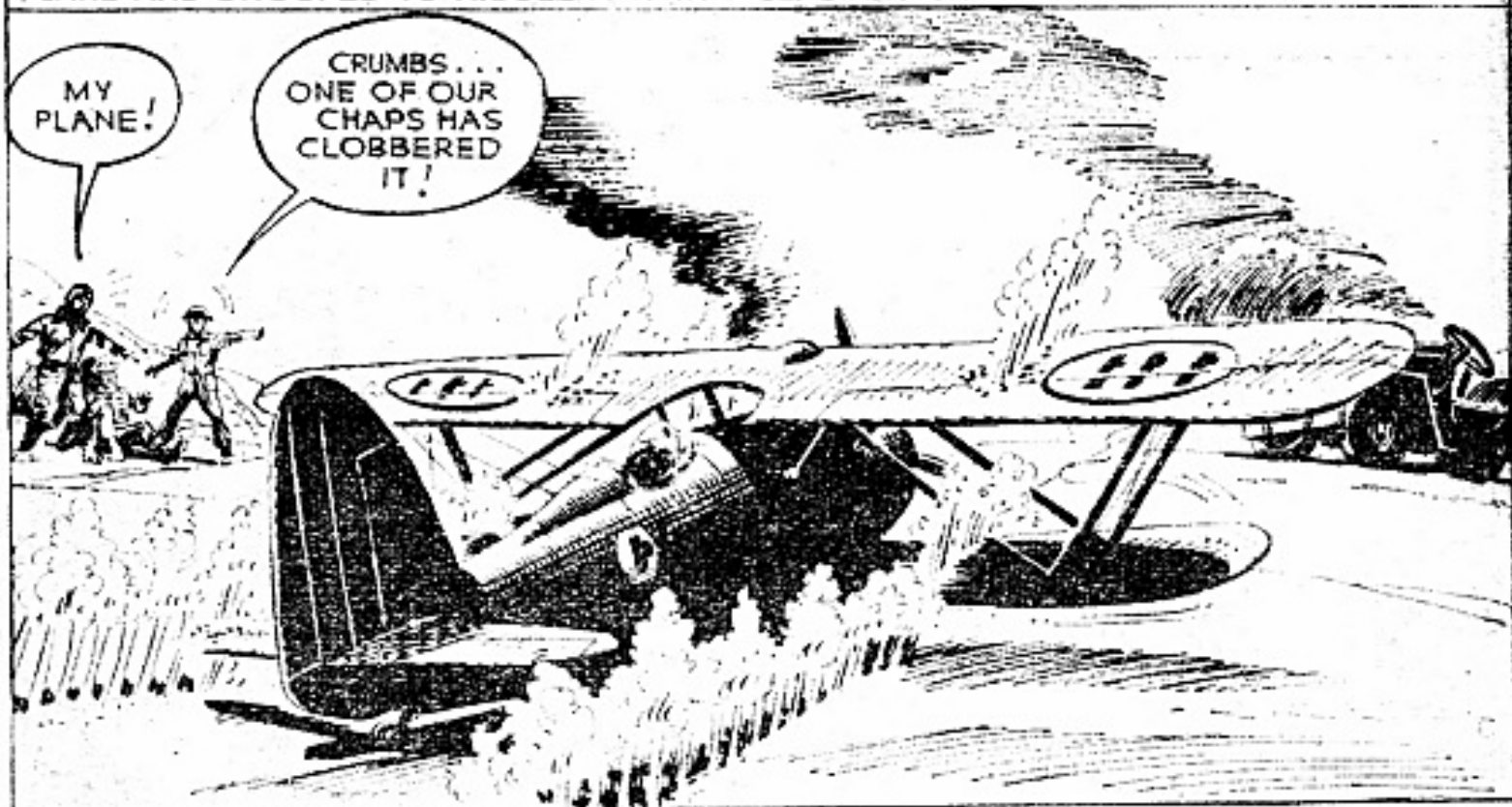


UNFORTUNATELY THE COLUMN WAS DOING JUST THAT. WORRIED AT TRACY'S NON-APPEARANCE, BOB WATSON HAD SENT BACK SCOUTS. HE WAS NOT TO GUESS THAT THE SCOUTS WOULD LOSE THEIR BEARINGS AND NOT RETURN TILL LATE, THUS DELAYING THE NIGHT'S MARCH.

I'D GIVE THREE MONTHS' PAY TO KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENED TO BILL?



MEANWHILE MARIO'S WELL-INTENTIONED SINGING WAS SHOCKED INTO SILENCE BY THE HARSH CHATTER OF MACHINE-GUNS. A BRITISH KITTICAWK HAD SPOTTED THE ITALIAN PLANE AND SWOOPED TO RIDDLE IT WITH INCENDIARY SHELLS.



MARIO'S VOICE NOW UTTERED NOTHING BUT DISMAY AT HIS LOST AIRCRAFT.



Chapter 2.

STRANDED!

GLOOMILY, ALL THREE TOOK STOCK OF THE SITUATION...

SACRAMENTO! WE ARE DEEP IN THE DESERT WITH ONLY THIS WINE AND BREAD... WHICH WE MUST SHARE.

WELL...THERE'S NO FRIEND OR FOE ABOUT THIS AFFAIR...WE'VE GOT TO HELP EACH OTHER OR DIE.

THAT'S FINE, SIR... BUT WHO IS WHOSE PRISONER? THAT'S A TRICKY ONE!

MAYBE WE'LL SETTLE LATER WHO IS PRISONER.

BUT OF COURSE, IT DEPENDS WHO WE NEXT MEET AS TO WHO WILL BE PRISONER... NO?

TEN-TO-ONE THE FLIPPING FIELD IT'LL BE JERRIES!

SUDDENLY THERE APPEARED A ROVING BAND OF ARABS WHO REGARDED THEM IN OMINOUS SILENCE.

ALLO...
TROUBLE'S
HERE!



THE DARKLY SILENT ARABS SIGNALLED ALL THREE TO MOUNT THE SPARE CAMELS, AND WITHOUT ANY EXPLANATION, MOVED OFF, HEADING FARTHER TO THE SOUTH.

COR...CAN'T SAY
THEY TALK THEIR
HEADS 'ORF!

MAYBE
THEY'RE TAKING
US TO THEIR
CHIEF.



REACHING THE ARAB TENTS, ALL THREE WERE MADE TO WAIT WHILE THE CHIEF WAS INFORMED.

I WONDER... ARE THESE ARABS ON YOUR SIDE OR MINE, MARIO?

MUCH DEPENDS ON THE ANSWER, MY FRIEND, EITHER YOU OR I WILL BE THE PRISONER, YES?

LOOKS TO ME LIKE THE SHEIKH OF ARABY WON'T BE ANYBODY'S FRIEND!

BLACKIE'S GLOOMY FORECAST WAS ONLY TOO RIGHT. THE CHIEF ARAB WAS NOBODY'S FRIEND, AND THE QUESTION OF PRISONERS WAS SOON SETTLED.

INFIDELS! YOU DESECRATE OUR LAND WITH WAR. YOU ARE MY PRISONERS!

WHILST TRACY AND MARIO SPENT AN UNEASY NIGHT, BLACKIE SEEMED TO BE WORKING ON SOME IDEA...AND THE NEXT MORNING...



MOVING CLOSER THEY SAW THAT BLACKIE WAS POURING SOME WATER ON THE SAND, INTENTLY WATCHED BY THE CHIEF AND HIS HENCHMEN.



TO THE PUZZLEMENT OF TRACY AND MARIO AND THE STARTLED FEAR OF THE ARABS, BLACKIE AMAZINGLY PROVED HIS WORDS.



THEN THE QUICK-WITTED BLACKIE PLAYED UPON THE SUPERSTITIOUS FEAR HE HAD AROUSED IN THE ARABS . . .

THOU OPPRESSOR OF
THE WHITE MAN! RELEASE
US OR I WILL RAISE NOT
ONE BUT A THOUSAND
SCORPIONS AMONG
YOUR TENTS!



FILLED WITH DREAD AT BLACKIE'S
AWFUL THREAT, THE ARABS FLUNG
THE GRATEFUL TRIO BACK INTO
THE DESERT.

GO! THROW NOT
THY ACCURSED SHADOWS
ON OUR TENTS
AGAIN!

I THOUGHT
THAT WOULD DO
THE TRICK!



PAUSING TO REST THE LIMPING TRACY, BLACKIE PRODUCED HIS PLASTIC SCORPION AND EXPLAINED THE TRICK.

WHY, IT'S ONLY A DUMMY SCORPION!

WELL DONE, BLACKIE! BUT HOW DID YOU DO IT?

YOU DIG A HOLE... STUFF IN SOME STRAW... COVER IT WITH SAND AND POUR WATER ON IT. THE WATER SWELLS THE STRAW WHICH PUSHES UP THE SAND AND ANYTHING ELSE YOU LIKE TO BURY. I BURIED MY MASCOOT... THIS SCORPION! BOY THAT RATTLED 'EM!

THRUST INTO THE PARCHING DESERT WITHOUT WATER, THE THREE BEGAN TO SUFFER FROM THIRST AND THE BLINDING GRIT STORMS.

SORRY I'M A BURDEN, BUT THE OLD LEG'S GIVING OUT.

YOU HAVE A BAD LEG, BUT A GOOD HEART, MY FRIEND!



BLACKIE'S KEEN EYES HAD BEEN WATCHING A DISTANT COLUMN OF DUST AND NOW HE SHOUTED FOR JOY.

LOOK!
A PATROL!
AND THEY'RE
OUR CHAPS,
TOO!

IT PROVED TO BE A PARTY OF CHEERFUL SOUTH AFRICANS. THEY LISTENED TO TRACY'S STORY, AT THE SAME TIME PROPERLY DRESSING HIS WOUND AND HANDING OUT REFRESHMENT.

LEG OR NO
LEG... I'VE GOT TO
REJOIN MY COLUMN...
AND PRETTY DARN
QUICK!

OKAY...
WE'LL TRY TO
OVERTAKE IT AND
HAND YOU
OVER.

FEELING REFRESHED AND MUCH RELIEVED
IN MIND, TRACY INTRODUCED MARIO.

MEET MY GOOD FRIEND,
MARIO FORZIA. HE HELPED
SAVE MY LIFE ALTHOUGH
I WAS HIS PRISONER.

SORRY,
MISTER FORZIA...
BUT IT'S YOUR TURN
TO BE PRISONER
NOW, EH?

IT IS THE
LUCK OF THE
WAR, SIGNOR.

THE OFFICER GAVE THEM HIS JEEP AND THE COLUMN SET OFF
IN PURSUIT OF TRACY'S MEN, WHO BY NOW WOULD BE FAR TO
THE NORTH. MARIO SANG AS IF NOTHING MATTERED.

DOESN'T OUR COLUMN HAVE
TO BE THERE BY FIRST
LIGHT TOMORROW,
MISTER TRACY?

THAT'S SO, BLACKIE.
I HOPE THEY'RE
KEEPING TO
SCHEDULE.

...BACK TO
SORRENTO.

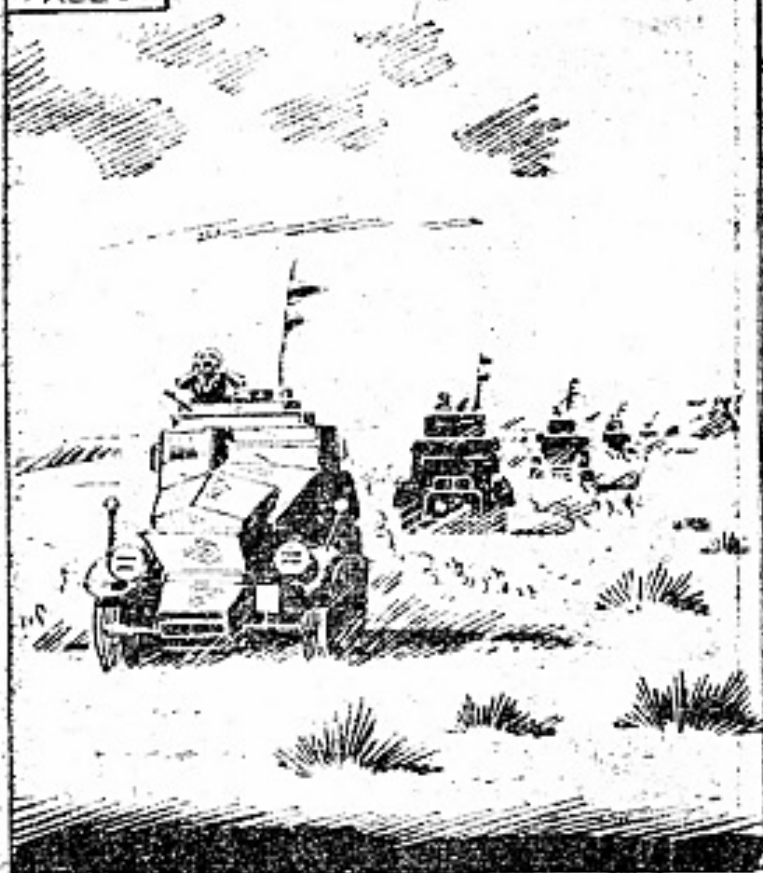


BUT THE COLUMN WERE BEHIND SCHEDULE, AND THIS WORRIED BOB WATSON. OBLIGED TO HIDE BY DAY, THEY HAD NEVER RECOVERED THE TIME THEY HAD LOST IN LOOKING FOR TRACY AND BLACKIE.

WE'LL NEVER MAKE IT, BOB, UNLESS WE START NOW... IN DAYLIGHT.

YOU'RE RIGHT, JIM... LET'S GET CRACKING AND CHANCE BEING SPOTTED.

SO BOB, AWARE THAT THE COLUMN WAS TRAILING BEHIND SCHEDULE, LED THEM BOLDLY IN DAYLIGHT AT A CRACKING PACE.



MEANWHILE THE SOUTH AFRICANS, FURTHER SOUTH AND IN HOT PURSUIT, HAD RUN INTO A STUKA DIVE-BOMBING ATTACK.

STUKAS... I HATE 'EM!

ME, TOO!



BARELY HAD THE ATTACK FINISHED, WHEN A FRESH THREAT CAME FROM SEVERAL GERMAN TANKS FIRING THEIR 75 MM. GUNS, OUT-RANGING THE SOUTH AFRICANS WHO HAD TO WITHDRAW.

EVERYBODY
GET OUT OF
RANGE...
QUICK!

LOOK OUT!
JERRY TANKS!



FRANTICALLY FOLLOWING THE SOUTH AFRICANS, BLACKIE'S ENGINE STALLED IN TRYING TO CLIMB AN ESCARPMENT.

WOW...
WE'RE STUCK!



TO TRACY'S DISMAY AND MARIO'S DELIGHT, THE JEEP COULD NOT BE BUDGED.

WE'VE
HAD IT,
BLACKIE.

COR...
SORRY ABOUT THIS,
MISTER TRACY!



THE LUCK
OF THE WAR...
YES?

WHEN THE GERMAN TANK LEADER DREW LEVEL, THERE WAS AN ARGUMENT... BUT IT WAS MARIO WHO HAD THE LAST WORD.

THE BRITISH
ARE MY
PRISONERS!

NONSENSE!
THEY ARE MY PRISONERS!
GO AWAY AND PLAY
TANKS!



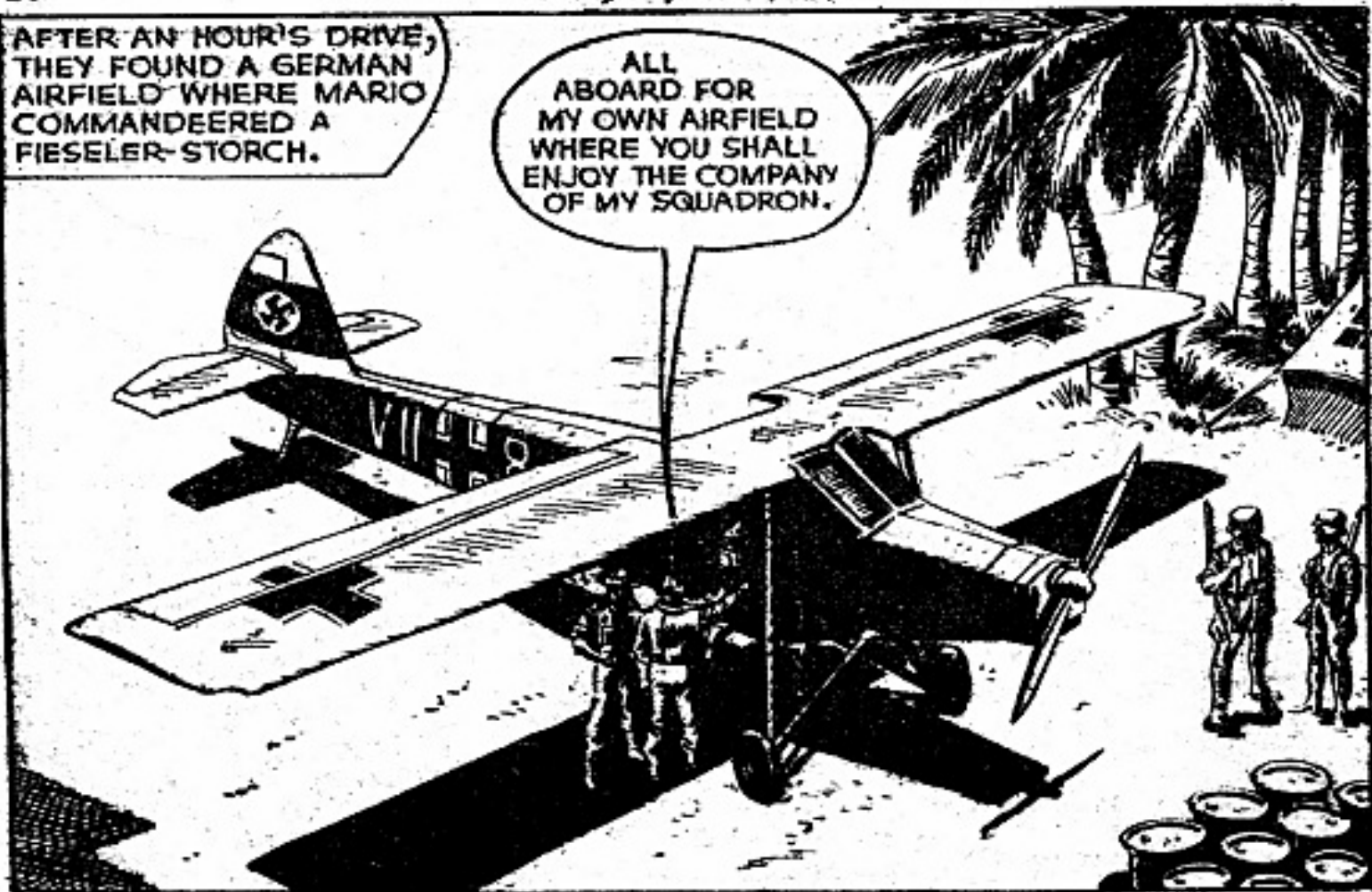
WITH THE JEEP RIGHTED ONCE MORE, MARIO TOOK THE WHEEL, EXPLAINING THAT THEY WOULD FIRST FIND AN AIRFIELD, THEN FLY TO HIS OWN BASE.

BELIEVE ME... YOU
WILL BE BETTER OFF
WITH US ITALIANS,
THAN WITH THE
GERMANS!



AFTER AN HOUR'S DRIVE, THEY FOUND A GERMAN AIRFIELD WHERE MARIO COMMANDEERED A FIESELER-STORCH.

ALL ABOARD FOR MY OWN AIRFIELD WHERE YOU SHALL ENJOY THE COMPANY OF MY SQUADRON.



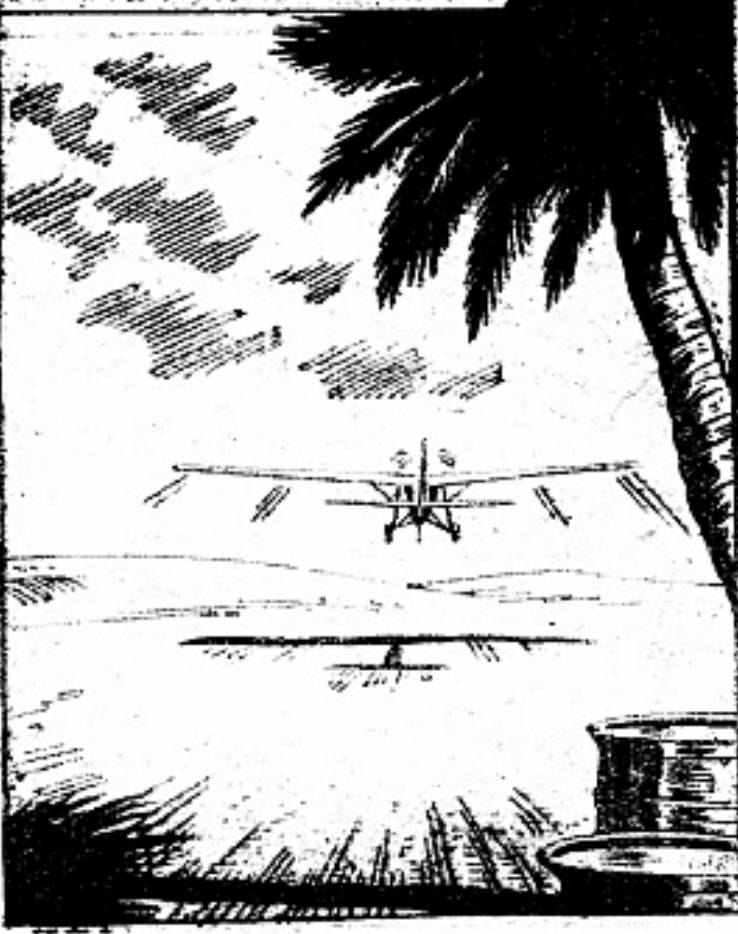
WHILE MARIO SIGNED FOR THE AIRCRAFT, TRACY TOOK THE CHANCE TO SPEAK TO BLACKIE.

DON'T TRY TO ESCAPE, BLACKIE. IF MISTER FORZIA IS FLYING US NEAR TOBRUK MAYBE WE'LL GET A CHANCE TO SLIP AWAY AND JOIN UP WITH THE BOYS.

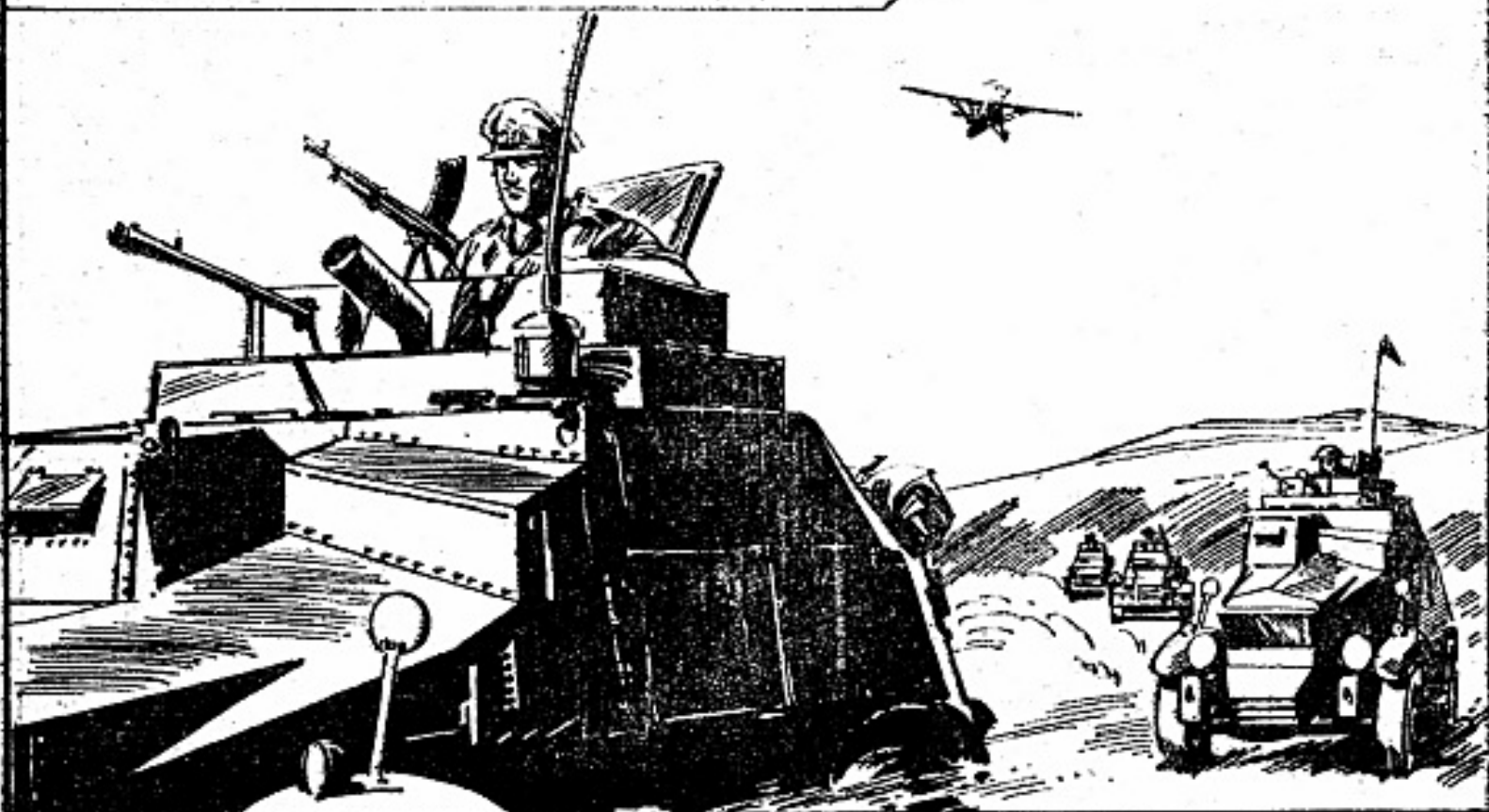


OKAY, SIB.

PRESENTLY ALL WAS READY AND MARIO TOOK OFF.



FARTHER NORTH BOB WATSON KEPT UP A ROARING SPEED WITH ANXIOUS EYES ON THE ENEMY HORIZON. MIRACULOUSLY THEY HAD NOT YET BEEN SPOTTED. WOULD THEIR LUCK HOLD OUT TILL DARK?



AFTER A LONG SILENCE, SAVE FOR HIS SINGING, MARIO SUDDENLY TILTED HIS PLANE AND POINTED DOWNWARD. A GLAD SIGHT MET TRACY'S EYES... IT WAS HIS OWN COLUMN. QUICKLY HE STOPPED BLACKIE FROM SAYING SO AND BEGAN TO THINK FURIOUSLY.

SOME BRITISH...
VERY BRAVE... LONG
WAY INSIDE OUR
LINES.

YES...
I WONDER
WHAT THEY'RE
UP TO?



BUT TRACY'S FIRST JOY GAVE WAY TO FEARS. BOB WAS TRAVELLING IN DAYLIGHT AND GOING VERY FAST...THAT MEANT HE KNEW HE WAS BEHIND TIME.



JUDGING THE MILES BOB HAD YET TO GO BY THE PALL OF SMOKE OVER TOBRUK, TRACY FEARED THAT BOB WOULD NEVER BE IN TIME FOR HIS REAR ATTACK ON THE GERMAN ARMoured REGIMENT.



BOB WILL NEVER MAKE IT BY DAWN WHEN THE MAIN ATTACK BEGINS.

THEN AN IDEA OCCURRED TO TRACY. OBVIOUSLY MARIO IN HIS CAREFREE WAY WAS NOT INTENDING TO TAKE ACTION ABOUT THIS COLUMN BELOW. TRACY MADE UP HIS MIND THAT MARIO SHOULD TAKE VERY DEFINITE ACTION. IT WAS THEIR ONLY HOPE.



TRACY FIGURED THAT IF BOB COULD NOT GET AT THE GERMAN REGIMENT IN TIME, THEN THE GERMANS WOULD HAVE TO COME OUT AND MEET BOB.



AND THE ONLY WAY TO DO THAT IS TO MAKE MARIO REPORT OUR BOYS TO THE GERMAN REGIMENT. BUT HOW?

TRACY KNEW MARIO WOULD NOT REPORT ANYTHING... HE WAS TOO EASY-GOING, SO HE BEGAN ARTFULLY TO PLAY ON THE ITALIAN LOVE OF SELF-DRAMATISM.

MARIO, I'M SURPRISED YOU'RE SO UNPATRIOTIC AS TO IGNORE THE THREAT OF THIS BRITISH COLUMN. YOUR COMRADES WOULD SURELY ACCLAIM YOU A HERO IF YOU WARNED THEM IN TIME TO SAVE THEIR LIVES.



AFTER MORE TALK LIKE THIS, MARIO BEGAN VISIBLY TO GROW IN SELF-IMPORTANCE.

ARE YOU A
SOLDIER, MARIO,
OR A PLAYBOY?

YOU ARE
RIGHT, MY FRIEND.
I HAVE A DUTY TO PERFORM.
I DO NOT MIND ABOUT THE
GERMANS BUT IF THESE BRITISH
SHOULD SURPRISE MY COUNTRYMEN...

AND WHEN MARIO HESITATED AS TO WHICH
REGIMENT SHOULD GET HIS REPORT... TRACY
CUNNINGLY SLIPPED IN A SUGGESTION...

A GOOD PATRIOT
WOULD ROUSE THE
NEAREST UNIT... SUCH
AS THE TWENTIETH
GERMAN ARMoured
CAR REGIMENT,
FOR INSTANCE.

AH... SI, SI!
I KNOW THEM. THEY
SNEER AT US ITALIANS
BUT THIS TIME THEY WILL
HAVE TO THANK AN
ITALIAN FOR RAISING
THE ALARM.

Chapter 3.

THE TRAP

EAGER TO PROVE HIMSELF TO THESE SCORNFUL GERMANS, MARIO SMARTLY LANDED AMONGST THE MASSED ARMoured CARS OF THE 20TH REGIMENT. HIS RECEPTION WAS NONE TOO POLITE.



MARIO HURRIED TO THE TENT OF THE COMMANDING OFFICER, MAJOR KRAUTZ... A TYPICAL LITTLE TURKEY-COCK OF A GERMAN.

AN ITALIAN PILOT TO SEE YOU, HERR MAJOR... AND TWO BRITISH PRISONERS.

WELL, DON'T JUST STAND THERE... BRING THEM TO ME AT ONCE!



MARIO EAGERLY TOLD HIS STORY, UNAWARE THAT MAJOR KRAUTZ WAS COLDLY RECOGNISING BILL TRACY AS THE MAN WHO HAD ONCE SWUNG HIM BY HIS BELT SO IGNOMINIOUSLY.

...A GREAT COLUMN OF BRITISH ARMOUR, MAJOR KRAUTZ... APPROACHING FROM THE SOUTH! THIS BRITISH OFFICER, CAPTAIN TRACY, AND THE SOLDIER, I TAKE PRISONER!

SO! A DESPICABLE BRITISH COLUMN EH? TRYING TO SURPRISE US, HEIN? WE WILL SEE!



REMEMBERING HIS HUMILIATION AT TRACY'S HANDS, KRAUTZ COULD BARELY CONTAIN HIS FURY. AND BILL TRACY GUESSED THAT HIS HARMLESS PRANK ON THE GERMAN WAS ABOUT TO RECOIL WITH INTEREST.

WE WILL SEE, CAPTAIN TRACY, WHO SHALL SWING WHO BY THE BELT! WE SHALL SWING THIS BRITISH COLUMN BY ITS NECK AND YOU WILL SEE ME DO IT... PIGDOG!



SHOUTING IN ALL DIRECTIONS, MAJOR KRAUTZ ORDERED AN IMMEDIATE TURN-OUT OF THE WHOLE REGIMENT. IT WAS PLAIN HE MEANT TO AVENGE HIMSELF ON TRACY BY SAVAGING THE BRITISH COLUMN BEFORE TRACY'S OWN EYES.

GET INTO THE TRUCK... QUICKLY!



TRACY SNATCHED A FEW MUTTERED WORDS WITH BLACKIE.

MY PLAN IS WORKING OUT BUT I DIDN'T BANK ON THE WHOLE MOB GOING, BLACKIE. OUR BOYS WILL GET A SHOCKING MAULING FROM THIS LOT.



MARIO, ATTRACTED BY THIS
EXCITING SITUATION,
INSISTED ON GOING, TOO.



IT WAS EVENING BEFORE THE POWERFUL REGIMENT
FINALLY MOVED OFF TO THE SOUTH.



WITH THE COMING OF DARK, NO SIGN OF THE BRITISH HAD BEEN SEEN SO MAJOR KRAUTZ HALTED HIS COLUMN ON A HIGH PLATEAU TO AWAIT REPORTS FROM HIS SCOUTS.



CREEPING WELL FORWARD THE GERMAN PATROL CAR SPIED THE APPROACH OF BOB WATSON'S COLUMN AND SPED BACK, UNDETECTED, TO REPORT.



MAJOR KRAUTZ RECEIVED THIS NEWS WITH GRIM SATISFACTION, TAKING A MALICIOUS DELIGHT IN THE CONCERN ON BILL TRACY'S FACE.



TRACY AND BLACKIE STOOD HELPLESSLY WATCHING MAJOR KRAUTZ DEPLOY HIS ARMOUR ALONG THE PLATEAU EDGE.



IN A FEW MINUTES THE GERMANS HAD ALIGNED THEMSELVES IN BATTLE-ORDER, EVERY MAN EAGER FOR A GLIMPSE OF THE DOOMED COLUMN. TRACY REGARDED THE LINE OF WICKED-LOOKING GUN MUZZLES WITH MOUNTING ANXIETY.



BY HEAVEN!
BOB'S COLUMN
WILL BE
MASSACRED!

SINCE MORNING BOB WATSON HAD LED THE COLUMN AT A TESTING PACE. ACHING EYES AND WEARY MUSCLES DID THEIR DUTY MECHANICALLY, BUT THE GOAL WAS IN SIGHT. BY DAWN THEY WOULD BE IN POSITION TO ATTACK!



MUSTN'T BE SEEN NOW.
MAYBE WE'D BETTER HUG
THE SHADOW UNDER
THAT PLATEAU.

BACK ON THE PLATEAU THERE CAME ONE OF THOSE SUDDEN STILLNESSES, AND IN THAT ABRUPT QUIET EVERYBODY HEARD A FAR-OFF SOUND.



LISTEN!

EVERY WAITING GERMAN LISTENED AGAIN... YES, IT WAS THE BRITISH COMING! QUIETLY EVERY MAN SLIPPED INTO ACTION POSITIONS.

IT IS THE BRITISH, HERR TRACY! NOW WATCH!



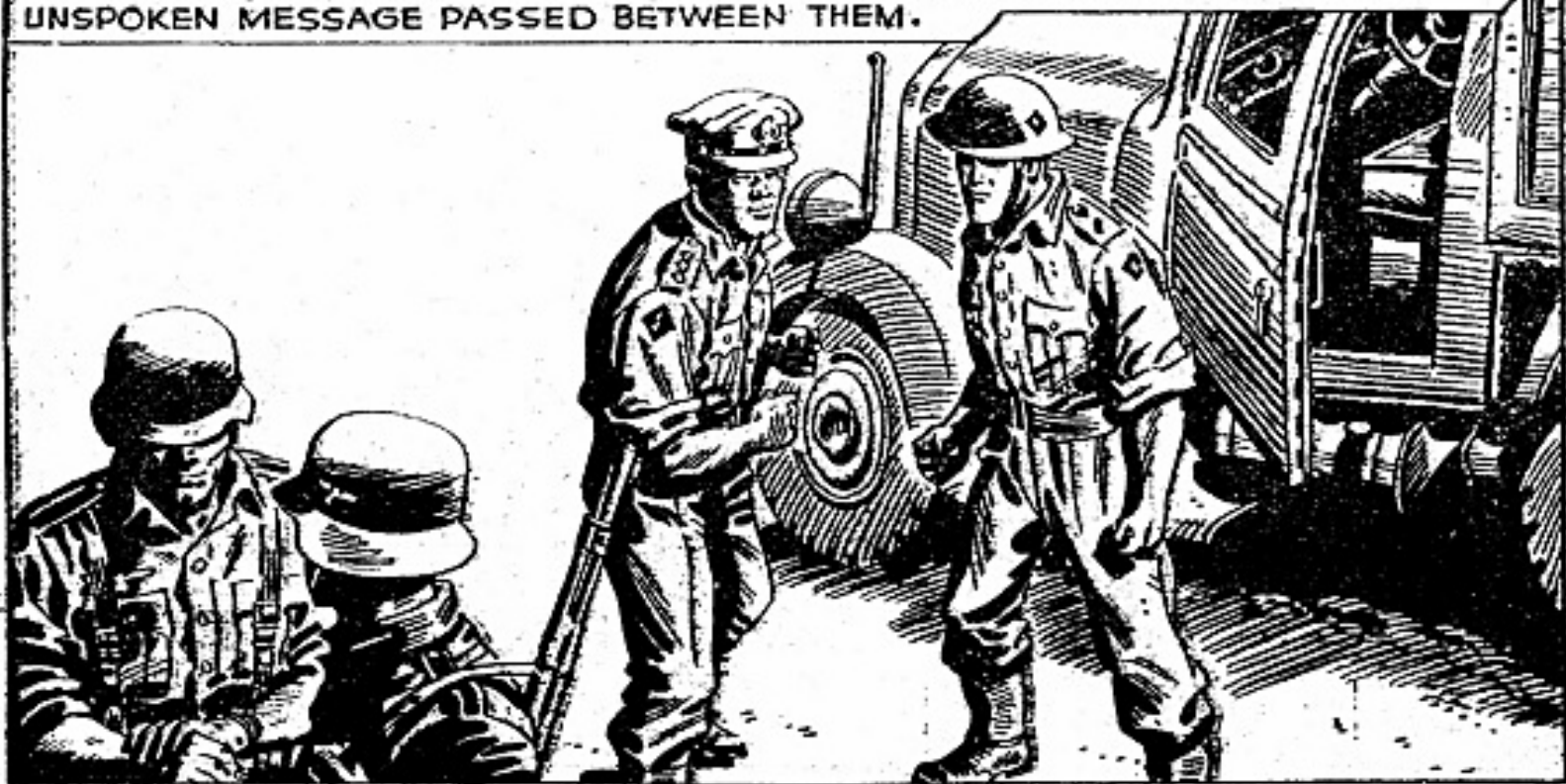
MARIO BEGAN TO FEEL VERY DIFFERENTLY ABOUT THINGS. NOT REALISING TILL NOW THE AWFUL CONSEQUENCES OF HIS ACTIONS, HIS SENSITIVE NATURE BECAME DEEPLY TROUBLED AT THE THOUGHT OF THIS INHUMAN SLAUGHTER. HE REMEMBERED THE CONTEMPTUOUS WAY HIS ALLIES HAD TREATED HIM... AND SUDDENLY MARIO HATED ALL GERMANS.



Chapter 4.

COUNTER-ATTACK

LEFT ALONE FOR A MOMENT WITH THE GUARD AND DRIVER, TRACY AND BLACKIE LOOKED AT ONE ANOTHER WITH SOMETHING LIKE DESPERATION... AND AN UNSPOKEN MESSAGE PASSED BETWEEN THEM.



WITHOUT WARNING, THEY
ACTED AS ONE.

NOW!





THEN TRACY SUDDENLY STOPPED AS THE ITALIAN, MARIO, CAME INTO VIEW FROM THE FRONT OF THE TRUCK.

MARIO!

AH, SO YOU ARE ESCAPING, EH, CAPTAIN TRACY? AND THE GERMANS HAVE JUST SENT ME TO KEEP GUARD OVER YOU. 'TIS A PITY...

THE NOISE OF THE TRUCK'S SELF-STARTER CAME TO THE EARS OF MAJOR KRAUTZ.

WHAT IS THAT NOISE?

I WILL GO AND SEE, HERR MAJOR.



SUDDENLY THE DESPERATE TRACY MADE UP HIS MIND ABOUT MARIO, AND THE ITALIAN SEEMED TO GUESS HIS INTENTION.



MARIO KNEW EXACTLY WHAT TRACY MEANT AND, WITH A SMILE, POINTED TO HIS EYE.



THERE WAS NO TIME TO LOSE SO TRACY TOOK GRATEFUL ADVANTAGE OF THE OFFER.



MARIO WENT DOWN WITH PRAISEWORTHY REALISM,
BUT FOUND TIME TO WAVE GOODBYE.



IN A MOMENT POOR MARIO WAS CONFRONTED BY A FURIOUS KRAUTZ AND HIS OFFICERS. WITHOUT HESITATION THE ITALIAN POINTED THE WRONG WAY.

IMBECILE!
WHICH WAY
DID THOSE
PIG-ENGLISH
GO?

THAT WAY,
I THINK.
THEY HIT ME..
LOOK!

AT ONCE GERMANS WERE SENT IN THE WRONG DIRECTION IN PURSUIT, THEMSELVES PURSUED BY THE ROARS OF THE LIVID KRAUTZ.

AFTER THEM...
DOLTS!



MEANWHILE BOB'S COLUMN WAS DRAWING EVER NEARER THE WAITING GUNS OF THE EXULTANT ENEMY.



DRIVING LIKE A DEMON, BLACKIE WRESTLED THE HURLING TRUCK DOWN THE CLIFF-EDGE TO THE PLAIN BELOW.

BY GLORY,
BLACKIE! WE'LL
MAKE IT
YET!



WITH A JOLT THAT RATTLED THEIR TEETH, THE TRUCK HIT THE LEVEL PLAIN AND BEGAN THE RACE TO WARN BOB WATSON.

THERE
THEY ARE!
FASTER!

DOING
ME BEST,
SIR!



HEARING THE RACKET BELOW, KRAUTZ RUSHED TO THE CLIFF EDGE, SHOUTING IMPOSSIBLE ORDERS.

THERE
THEY GO!
STOP THEM!



FORTUNATELY FOR BOB SOME OF THE GERMANS TOOK KRAUTZ' ORDER LITERALLY AND OPENED FIRE ON THE SPEEDING TRUCK.





HEARING THE FIRING, BOB SENSIBLY BROUGHT HIS COLUMN TO A HALT.

WHAT'S
GOING ON?



AT LAST, WITH THE TRUCK PIERCED WITH BULLET HOLES BUT OTHERWISE INTACT, TRACY MADE A JOYFUL BUT BUSINESS-LIKE REUNION WITH THE COLUMN.

THANK HEAVENS!
BILL TRACY!

SAVE YOUR
COMPLIMENTS,
BOB, AND LISTEN
QUICKLY!



IN A FEW CRISP WORDS BILL TRACY GAVE BOB THE SITUATION...



WITH EVERY NERVE TAUT, THE BRITISH BOYS PRESSED FORWARD IN THE WAKE OF THEIR GALLANT YOUNG LEADER.



WITH EVERY MAN'S FINGER TWITCHING ON A TRIGGER, TRACY ARTFULLY LED HIS COLUMN SO CLOSE UNDER THE CLIFF THAT THE ENEMY COULD NOT BRING HIS GUNS TO BEAR.

BUT THEY HAVE COME TOO CLOSE - HERE MAJOR... WE CANNOT SIGHT OUR GUNS ON THEM!

FOOLS!

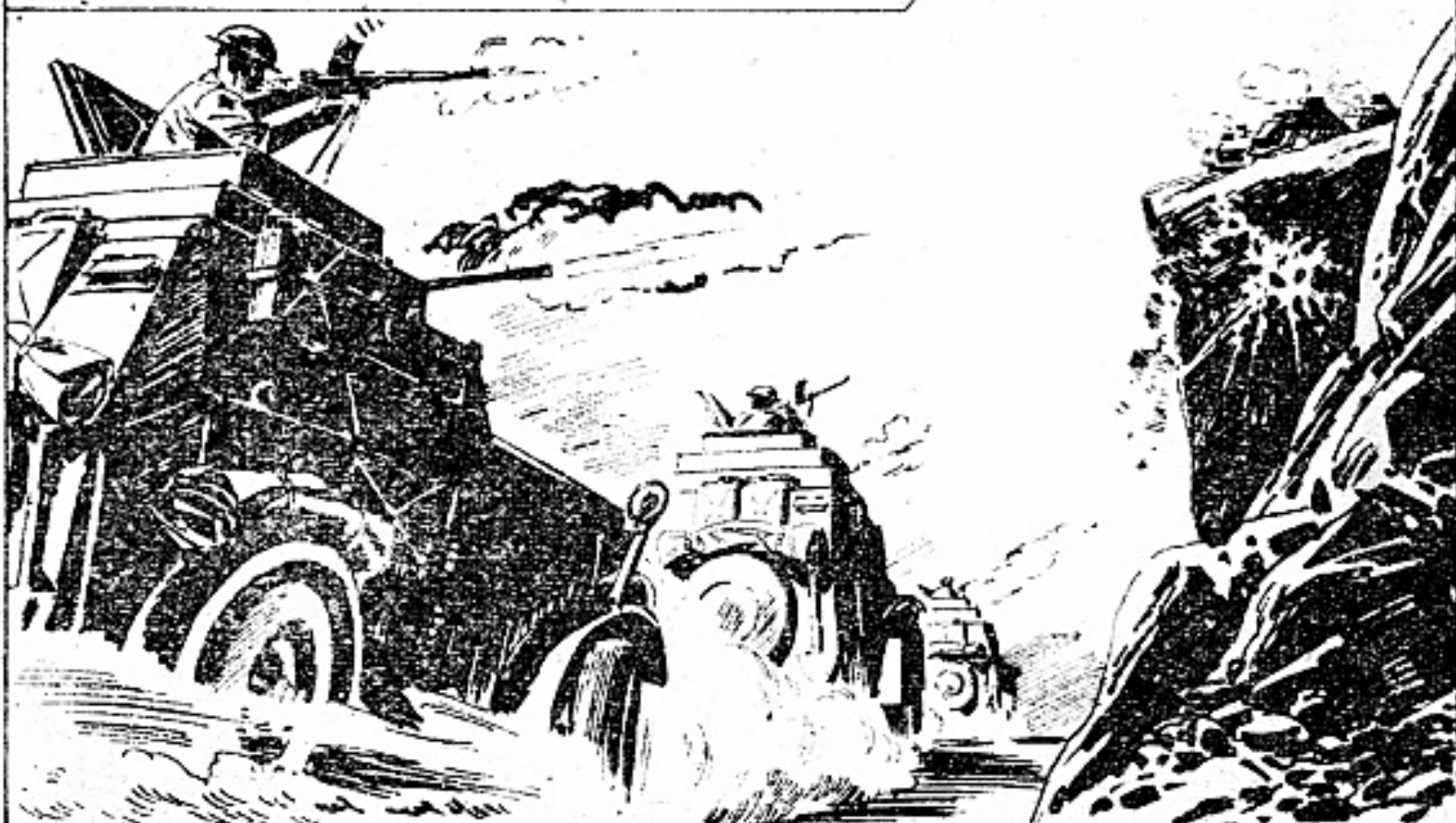


UNABLE TO TRAIN HIS GUNS ON THE EXASPERATING BRITISH, KRAUTZ ROARED FOR EVERY VEHICLE TO MOVE FORWARD.

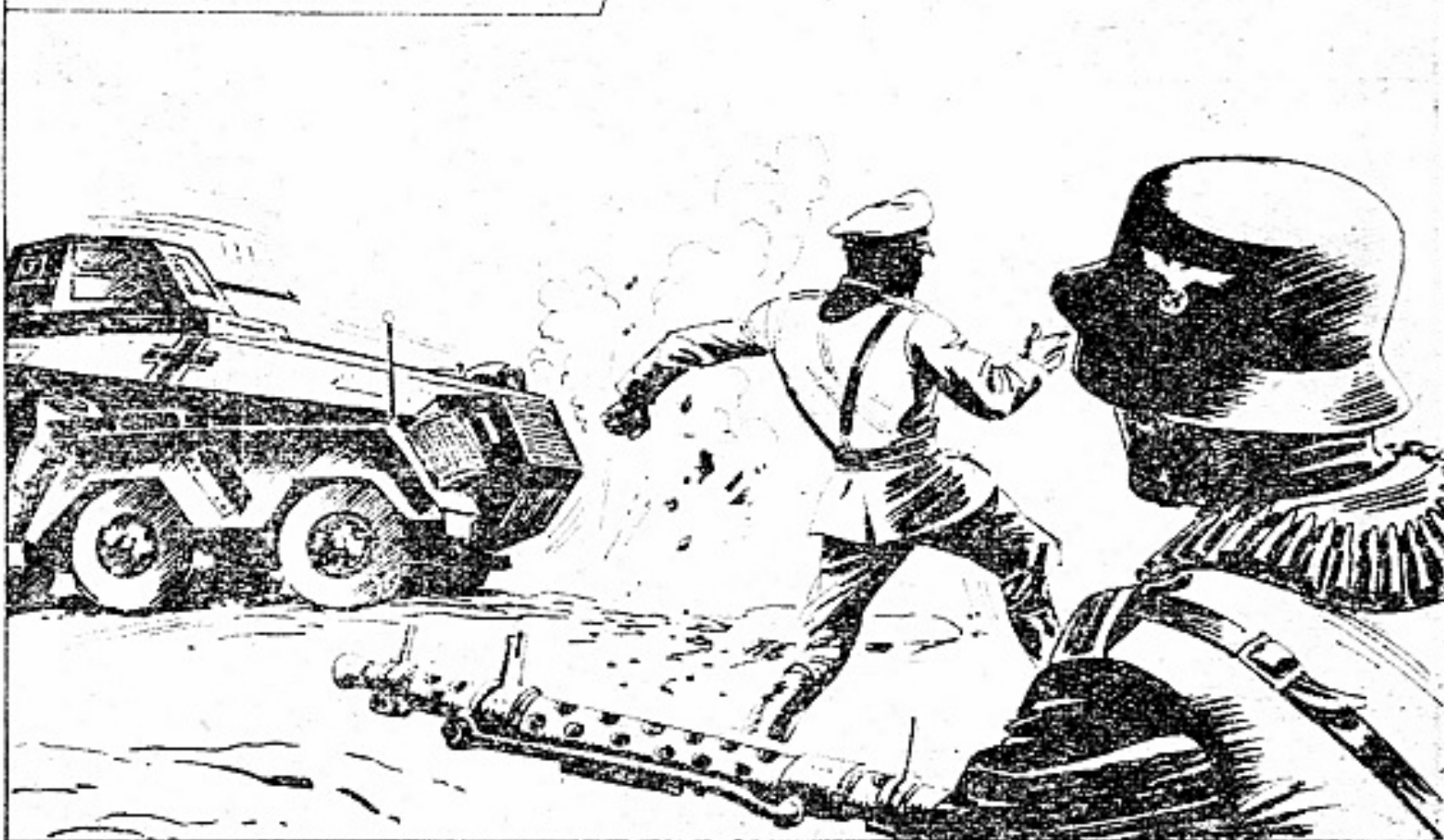
ADVANCE FIRE!



AS TRACY'S COLUMN MOVED INTO POSITION, HE GAVE A LONG PIERCING BLAST ON HIS WHISTLE. AT ONCE EVERY BRITISH GUN SPAT A CASCADE OF SHOT AND SHELL ALL ALONG THE RIM OF THE CLIFF.



IN A FEW SECONDS THE LOOSE SANDSTONE BEGAN TO CRUMBLE...



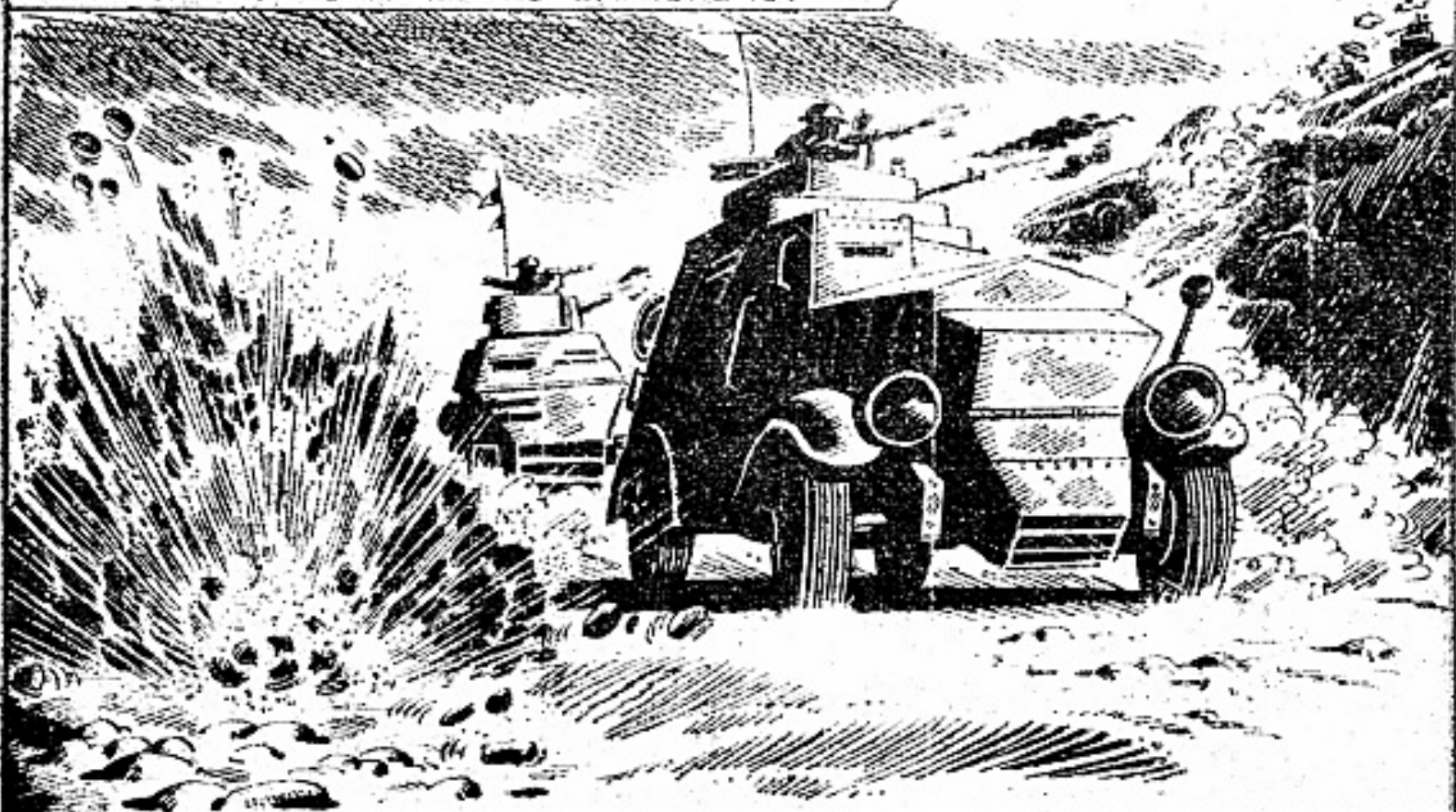
THEN THE CRUMBLING GREW TO A SLIDE...



...AND THE SLIDE TURNED
TO AN AVALANCHE! THE
ECLIPSE OF MAJOR KRAUTZ
AND HIS 20TH. ARMoured
CAR REGIMENT WAS AT HAND.



WHATEVER FIGHT REMAINED IN THE DEMORALISED ENEMY WAS SOON DOUSED BY A LAST FEARFUL BARRAGE FROM GRIM-LIPPED BRITISHERS.



BILL TRACY, WITH THE FEELING OF A JOB WELL DONE, DISENGAGED WITH THE BROKEN ENEMY AND LED HIS JUBILANT MEN TOWARDS TOBRUK. TRACY NOW KNEW THAT THE GALLANT DEFENDERS OF THAT TOWN WOULD AT LEAST BE SPARED THE ATTENTIONS OF WHAT WAS ONCE A POWERFUL GERMAN ARMoured REGIMENT.



MARIO FORZIA STOOD LOOKING DOWN ON THE SHAMBLES WITH A WRY EXPRESSION.



JUST TOO BAD FOR HERR KRAUTZ! THE LUCK OF THE WAR, H'M?

BILL TRACY'S COLUMN ARRIVED AT TOBRUK IN TIME TO JOIN IN THE SUCCESSFUL COUNTER-OFFENSIVE AND TO WELCOME HIS OLD PALS WHO ALL THIS TIME HAD SO BRAVELY HELD OUT IN THE TOWN. ROMMEL WAS ON THE RUN!



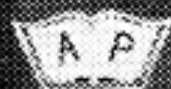
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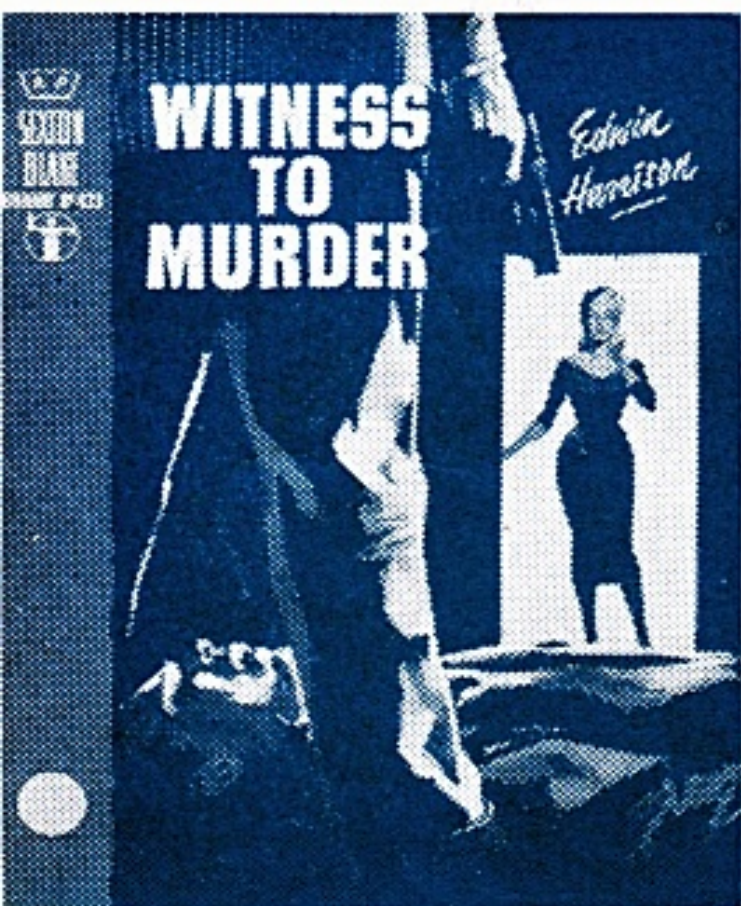
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